

Simple Questions

With straightforward Biblical answers

Claims of Charismatics & Pentecostals

Q. Are our bodies improved in a miraculous way by faith so that we can defy ageing, know constant good health, and be free from affliction and tiredness?

A. No!

Our outward man is perishing. 2 Cor 4:16

My flesh and my heart fail. Ps 73:26

Q. Is healing automatic in the atonement for every believer with faith?

A. No! Apostles, apostolic co-workers and godly brethren in the New Testament knew illness and even sickness that was close to death. Furthermore, there is no example of a believer being healed in the NT.

I will not boast, except in my infirmities. ... a thorn in the flesh was given to me [Paul]. 2 Cor 12:5, 7

Use a little wine for your [Timothy's] stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 1 Tim 5:2

Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. 2 Tim 4:20

Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death. Phil 2:25-27

Q. Are healings to be boasted about?

A. No; In fact it is our infirmities that we should boast about.

I will not boast, except in my infirmities. ... a thorn in the flesh was given to me [Paul]. 2 Cor 12:5, 7

Q. Does power come from our faith?

A. No. Power is always the province of God. He gives this power to the weak.

He gives power to the weak, and to *those who have* no might He increases strength. Isa 40:29

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy. Col 1:11 [I.e. power is given to those in tribulation who need patience.]

And He [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10

Q. What then is faith?

A. Faith is apprehension of the promises of God in his word. This faith is a divine gift and it comes from hearing God's word. The power is in the divine promise; true faith apprehends that promise and trusts in it.

Faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rm 10:17

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal 3:2

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal 3:14

The Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Gal 3:22

Q. Is God's kingdom powerfully changing this evil world to be better and better so that the church gradually comes to control it before the end? Are we to be 'world-changers'? Should we look for a visible, material manifestation of Christ's kingdom on earth today in terms of power over nations?

A. No! God's kingdom at this time is spiritual and heavenly. It is only joined to the material creation after the end (after the return of Christ and the final judgment) when heaven is on earth and centred in Christ.

While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 2 Cor 4:18

Election and 'whosoever will'

And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Rev 22:17

Q. How do we explain election as Christ dying only for the elect when God says that whoever wills can come?

A. There is no contradiction. Election is the Biblical doctrine that God chose those who would be saved in eternity. He did this in his good pleasure and not for any foreseen act of the elect person.

'Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely', is the general call of the Gospel to everyone. The Gospel is preached openly to everyone; all who come to Christ can be saved. The problem is that man cannot come (because of his sin) unless God first draws him to Christ (Jn 6:44). Those who do come are the ones that God draws; i.e. the elect.

Whoever wills can be saved but the only ones that will are the ones God gives the will to. This is the effectual call of the Gospel; irresistible grace to the elect alone.

Encouragement

Q. What keeps us from losing heart?

A. Knowing that we have received God's mercy and now have hope of eternal life.

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 Cor 4:1

Imputed righteousness and works

Q. I understand that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us for justification. I also understand that God, out of his good pleasure, rewards us for our good works. But do these good works add to our standing in Christ? Rev 19:8 suggests that they do, unless the word 'acts' is wrong.

'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Rev 19:7-8

Firstly, the word 'acts' is a correct translation. It is *dikaiw,mata* (*dikaioma* – righteous acts, deeds) not *dikaioy,nhn* (*dikaioy,sune* – righteousness, the state of righteousness). However, we must never develop a doctrine solely based on symbolic passages of Scripture.

Secondly, we only ever stand in heaven on the basis of Christ's righteousness; our works are always tainted with sin. Our justification is exclusively down to Christ's work with nothing of ours added at all.

Thirdly, it is in God's goodness that he counts us fit for rewards, not the value of our works. Good deeds performed, which God rewards us for, do not contribute to our justification.

Fourthly, note that the saints were already standing in heaven in fine white linen, which was the imputed righteousness of Christ. [Rev 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 13, 14]

Finally, any good works we do here are done in Christ; anything else is flesh. What is done in Christ (by his strength, through his Spirit, to God's glory) is counted as being part of Christ's work, but done through us. Fine linen is the correct symbol to apply to this. White fine linen always speaks about the righteousness of Christ in Revelation.

Ministry of witness

Q. What is the basis of preaching?

A. It is preaching Christ; manifesting Christ in the Gospel. [Note that the people doing this are slaves (bondservants); not an elite.]

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 2 Cor 4:5

Q. What are the forms of Gospel preaching?

A. Proclamation, heralding, publishing, announcing, speaking boldly.

That He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you. Acts 3:20 [*Prokerusso* – 'proclaimed']

They taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Acts 4:2 [*Kataggello* – announce, proclaim, publish.]

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. Acts 8:5 [*Kerusso* – to herald, publish, declare, proclaim.]

When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Acts 8:12 [*Euaggelizo* – evangelise, to bring good news, to bring good tidings.]

He [Paul] had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Acts 9:27 [*Parrhesiazomai* – to speak boldly or freely.]

Q. Is it right to ask for money in preaching the Gospel?

A. No; it is never right.

That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. 1 Cor 9:18

Ministry to the saints

Q. What is ministry to the saints?

A. It is feeding God's sheep. This is different from preaching the Gospel to outsiders. The sheep are fed by didactic instruction in Biblical doctrine; encouragement, exhortation and admonishment in God's word; one-to-one catechising at home and by discussion around the word. This is summarised in the word 'edification'; God's people must be built up as sheep are nourished by a good shepherd.

Jesus said to him [Peter], 'Feed My sheep'. Jn 21:17

[Paul] taught you publicly and from house to house. Acts 20:20

[Paul] sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith. 1 Thess 3:2

Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1 Tim 4:13

Let all things be done for edification. 1 Cor 14:26

Q. Is preaching the chief means of feeding the sheep?

A. It is not. Preaching is for the un-evangelised and is a useful means of presenting the Gospel to crowds. It is not a good means of putting over detailed truth to church members. The method used by Paul (and Jesus himself) was discussion, exhortation and encouragement.

Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. Acts 20:7

'Spoke' here ('preached' in AV) is the word *dialegomai*, which means, discussion, converse with, reason with, debate with. There is no NT evidence that teachers formally preached sermons to the gathered church in the manner of modern churches. Teaching in the early church was always two-way discussion. The reason for this is that it is effective. Formal sermons are not effective methods to communicate deep truths.

Opposition

Q. What is the main source of our opposition?

A. It is thinking wrongly. This is when deception is received instead of Biblical truth. Thus the roots of opposition are the arguments that oppose the true knowledge of God, which take our minds captive.

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? 2 Cor 10:4-7

Q. What is the example Paul uses to show how we can be deceived in our minds?

A. It is Eve being deceived by the serpent.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 2 Cor 11:3

Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 1 Tim 2:14

Q. How do we deal with this attack?

A. We must bring every thought into obedience to Christ and cast down contrary arguments.

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor 10:4-7

Q. What is the source of these arguments?

A. Strongholds [lit. a castle or fortress]; that is, the belief systems that are the fundamental basis of deceptive arguments and doctrines.

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor 10:4-7

Q. Where do these false belief systems originate from?

A. In the ideas sent out from Satan via his demonic hordes.

In latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. 1 Tim 4:1

The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth. 2 Thess 2:9-10

The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. 1 Cor 10:20

Q. What is the chief weapon in our armoury to fight wrong ideas?

A. It is the truth, which is Christ.

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Jn 8:32

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth. Eph 6:14 [The first aspect of the armour of God.]

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15

Q. So what is failure in the spiritual war?

A. Turning away from the truth.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Rm 1:18

But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness -- indignation and wrath. Rm 2:8

They will turn *theirears* away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 2 Tim 4:4

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. Jm 5:19-20

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 1 Jn 1:6

He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 Jn 2:4

Scripture

Q. What does a believer need in order to be equipped for life?

A. Primarily he needs to study and understand God's word, manifested in the Bible. Good works result from knowing God's will; knowing what is right and what is evil. This knowledge comes from understanding Scripture.

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb 5:12-14

What does the Scripture say? Gal 4:30

Q. How high a value does God place upon Scripture?

A. The highest value. The word of God is magnified above all his attributes.

Praise your name for your loving-kindness and your truth; for you have magnified your word above all your name. Ps 138:2

Q. What of those who devalue Scripture?

A. Those who place little importance upon the word of God are dishonouring God himself. To claim you are honouring God when you devalue Scripture is evidence of being deceived and of following Satan. This is especially true of those who claim that their prophecies are more important than the Bible. These prophecies are merely the constructs of their vain imaginations.

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD. ... I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings. ... I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long will *this* be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart. Therefore behold, I *am* against the prophets," says the LORD". Jer 23:16-30

For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in my name; I have not sent them, says the LORD. Jer 29:8-9

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 Jn 4:1

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Matt 7:15

Q. What is the correct translation of Hebrews 2:16? BF Westcott's commentary on Hebrews and the RV side with the KJV against the NKJV. KJV-Only preachers say that the NKJV translation undermines the doctrine of the incarnation. Furthermore, is there a problem with using Hades instead of hell? Some say you should say hell not Hades when it is clear from the context that the verse speaks of eternal punishment.

A.

For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. NKJV

For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. KJV

The differences in Heb 2:16 depend upon how you interpret one word [*epilambanomai*]. This word has a large range of nuanced meanings, from 'take, catch, lay hold of, attain, overtake', to 'help or to succour' (Strong's 1949). The context must determine the precise meaning and there are different views as to what the context is saying. Both would be acceptable translations of the word but are they correct translations?

When studying or translating Scripture we must often take into account the context in order to correctly interpret specific words. What we must not do is come with some prior agenda.

Regarding Heb 2:16: we must discern what the writer's argument is and use that as the basic context for determining disputed word meanings. In this passage he is not seeking to establish a defence of the incarnation at all but a demonstration that Christ the Son is greater than all the angels.

To make sense of the verse, the KJV has to add a whole phrase that is not in the Greek text ('him the nature of'), printed in italics in the verse. This does not bode well.

The writer also argues a solidarity with the elect ('made like his brethren') whom God gives aid to (verse 18). The better translation is the NKJV, which takes into account both these arguments. The modern KJV edition errs in that the translators were too focused upon keeping a cherished proof text, even though it was known to be an unwise translation.

Regarding Hades and hell; again we must translate on the basis of context but, more importantly, on the literal translation of the word. In the case of Hades and hell we do not need context so much since the meanings are clear. Thus translators should make a direct, literal translation with no view about interpretation.

The best translating policy is to always use grammatically correct, literal, word-for-word translations. In cases of disputed words, or words that have multiple meanings, then we add into the mix the question of context and the writers purpose in writing. Interpretation should be left for teachers using the text. Translation is not exegesis.

Thus we should avoid translations that are paraphrases (such as the *Living Bible* or *Today's English Version*) or those that use the 'dynamic equivalent' method (phrase-for phrase, giving the sense; such as the *NIV*).

Q. What about other issues in translation, such as manuscript source?

A. This is a good point. The RSV and the NASB are good literal translations but they err in other ways, being based on a suspect manuscript source.

To make a very, very complicated issue simple, there are two basic families of manuscripts available for translating the New Testament. Today these are called the Byzantine family and the Alexandrian family of manuscripts (there used to be other names used).

The Byzantine family is where the *Textus Receptus* comes from and is the basis of the *KJV* the *NKJV* and the recent *World English Bible*. The Alexandrian family is the basis of all other versions and is represented in the United Bible Societies (or Nestle-Aland) published text.

The Alexandrian family of manuscripts tends to be older but has more faulty texts. Modern translations support the Westcott-Hort principles of textual criticism and claim that the recently discovered Tischendorf manuscripts (and others), of the Alexandrian family, are older and therefore more accurate. But they are few. Manuscripts in this tradition tend to have thousands of places where different verses disagree with each other. Thus there is a tendency to eclectic translation methods based on many manuscripts, but the judgment as to what is correct tends to be subjective.

The Byzantine is more recent (not before 4th c.) but more accurate texts. Copyists in this tradition destroyed old copies when they made new ones to avoid words becoming worn and misread. The Byzantine family, though more recent, has by far the majority of manuscripts and support the textual methodology of the Reformation. The traditional text is that of the *Textus Receptus* ('Received Text') published in 1624 and 1633; mostly based upon *Stephen's Text* published in 1550 and the *Beza Texts*. More recently there is the *Majority Text*, which is very similar but takes into account manuscripts discovered in recent centuries. It is especially more accurate in the book of Revelation.

Summary of the case for the Byzantine text:

- It has overwhelming support in the majority of Greek manuscripts.

- It has overwhelming support from the Lectionaries¹ and the early Versions; this includes the Syriac (or Aramaic) and Latin Versions which go back to the mid-second century; the Peshitta, (a good early Syriac translation) contains Byzantine readings, as does the Ulfilas Gothic version of the fourth century.
- Approximately 95% of the Uncial² manuscripts have a Byzantine type of text.
- Over 95% of the Minuscules³ have a Byzantine type of text.

There are thousands of minor differences between the Alexandrian type of text and the Byzantine type, with the word equivalent of the books of 1 and 2 Peter being omitted in the Alexandrian [the UBS text is 2,502 words shorter than the TR]. The AV (KJV) and RV differ in over 36,000 places.

Therefore, Bible versions based upon the Byzantine manuscripts are advisable. That is, essentially, the *KJV* and the *NKJV*. My preference is the *NKJV* since it is more correct and easier to read. How are modern young people supposed to know what, ‘my reins also instruct me in the night seasons’ means? [Ps 16:7, ‘My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.’ *NKJV*]

Seeing God

Q. Is there not a contradiction between Exodus 33:11, ‘So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend,’ with verse 20: ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live’?

A. Firstly, in verse 11 the Hebrew word *paniym*, translated as ‘face to face’ has many nuances, including just meaning ‘presence’. Moses was in the presence of God. However, verse 20 is also *paniym* where the context clearly means ‘face’, another variant meaning.

In general, even in English, ‘face to face’ is idiomatic for being in the presence of, without actually being very close to the person involved. People go to concerts and say that they saw their rock star hero face to face when, in actuality, they may have been hundreds of yards away. In this case it just means that they saw a musician live.

God explains it to us when he says in Ex 33:21-23: ‘And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'" Moses was in God’s close presence but did not see his face. To have done so would have meant death.

Jacob is also said to have seen God face to face in Gen 32:30, yet he wrestled with a man (v24). This was a theophany where the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, appeared as a man. So Jacob did not see the Father.

In Judges 6:22 Gideon said that he saw God face to face yet he only saw an angel.

¹ Early church service books containing selected readings from the Gospels, Acts and Epistles

² Capital letters or majuscules.

³ Smaller letters in a cursive, free flowing hand.

In Isaiah 6:5 the prophet says that he saw God face to face and yet he only saw a vision of God.

In Deut 5:24 Moses (quoting the Jewish assembly) described seeing God as, 'And you said: "Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives".' Moses further explains in Deut 5:4-5, 'The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain.' 'Face to face' here means seeing God's glory and hearing God's words; it does not mean actually seeing God's face. Although the Israelites are said to see God 'face to face', in fact they only actually saw fire; 'face to face' was an idiom for being in God's presence.

We have to be controlled by clear doctrinal Scriptures, including the ones that say, 'No one has seen God at any time,' Jn 1:18; and 1 Tim 6:16: 'whom no man has seen or can see'.

This is well explained by Rabbi Jehudah, in Sepher Cosri, 'Of that divine glory mentioned in the scripture, there is one degree which the eyes of the prophets were able to explore; another which all the Israelites saw, as the cloud and consuming fire; the third is so bright, and so dazzling, that no mortal is able to comprehend it; but should anyone venture to look on it, his whole frame would be dissolved.' In such inconceivable splendour is the Divine Majesty revealed to the inhabitants of the celestial world, where he is said to 'dwell in the light which no man can approach unto.' By the 'face of God,' therefore, we are to understand that light inaccessible before which angels may stand, but which would be so insufferable to mortal eyes, that no man could see it and live. [*Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*]

On verse 20 Gill says,

Exo 33:20 - And he said, thou canst not see my face,.... Meaning not his form, his essence, his very nature, and the glory of it, that Moses must know he could never see; but the brightest displays of his grace and goodness in Christ, the fullest discoveries of it, which are too much for man, in the present state of things, to have, who sees in part, and but through a glass darkly, not face to face, or in the most complete and perfect manner; it is but a small part and portion of God, and of his ways and works, as of creation and providence, so more especially of grace, salvation, and redemption by Jesus Christ, that is known of him; the things of the Gospel in their full perfection are what eye has not seen; and particularly were more hidden and unseen under the legal dispensation; this face was covered with types and shadows, and dark representations of things; though, in comparison of that state, we now, with open face, behold the glory of the Lord, yet still it is through a glass darkly, and we have not the clear and full view of things as will be hereafter:

for there shall no man see me and live: if there was to be such a revelation made of the grace and goodness, and glory of God in Christ, as it really is in itself, it would be too much for mortals in the present state to bear; it would break their earthen vessels in pieces; the full discovery therefore is reserved to a future state, when these things will be seen as they are, and men will be in a condition to receive them; otherwise we find that men have, in a sense, seen the face of God in this life, and have lived; though many, and even good men, have been possessed with such a notion, that if a man saw God he must die, see Gen 32:30.

In summary: 'face to face' is idiomatic and must be translated by the context. It may not actually mean eye to eye contact.

Moses saw God face to face but was only in his close presence. The Israelites saw God face to face but only saw his glory in the fire. Others saw God face to face but only saw a vision, or an angel.

‘Face to face’ cannot be taken literally all the time.

Teaching

Q. What is the basis of good teaching?

A. It is manifesting the Biblical truth of God, done in a good conscience.

Handling the word of God ... by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2 Cor 4:2

Q. What is the method of good teaching?

A. It is detailed, careful exegesis leading to sound interpretation of Biblical texts, which in turn leads to the establishment of sound doctrine.

Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. Titus 1:9

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me. 2 Tim 1:13

Q. What is false teaching?

A. It is any teaching which is not squarely based upon the word of God. The source of such teaching is demonic.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. 1 Tim 4:1

No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit. 1 Pt 1:20-21

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies. 2 Pt 2:1

[Paul's letters] which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. 2 Pt 3:16

The Gospel

Q. What is the Gospel?

A. It is the Good News that God has sent a Saviour from heaven to deliver us from our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ did this by dying on the cross, being condemned for our sins, and then was raised from the dead in order to give us eternal life and righteousness.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. Rm 1:16

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Cor 1:18

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor 15:3-4

The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Col 1:5

Q. What is the essential change that occurs when a person believes the Gospel?

A. It is that being regenerated by God's call in the Gospel, or born again, the believer has faith in Christ and consequently repents from sin and turns towards God. This is called conversion.

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again.'" Jn 3:3-7

God ... now commands all men everywhere to repent. Acts 17:30

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Jn 1:12-13

God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess 2:13-14

Q. What does light represent in Scripture?

A. It is the Gospel of the glory of Christ; the truth. This is the glory of God. Christ is the human manifestation of God's glory and the Gospel presents that to men for their hope.

Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ... For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor 4:4, 7

Theology

Q. What is the essence of Arminianism?

A. The fundamental features of Arminianism are twofold: universalism and natural ability in man.

Regarding universalism, this is evidenced in the following:

- The claim that God's love is universal; God loves everybody.
- The claim that the atonement is universal; Christ died for everybody.
- The claim that grace is universal: this has to be broken down into two sections. Historic, continental Arminians, who followed Jacob Arminius, believed in a single grace that was sufficient for everyone but this grace could be resisted by men. Evangelical Arminians (followers of John Wesley) believe in two types of grace; prevenient grace that is given to all and may be resisted which enables sinful men to believe the Gospel (who could not otherwise do so); plus saving grace which operates when a man chooses to submit to prevenient grace.

- The claim that the call of God is universal; the Gospel message goes out equally powerfully to all men; instead of effectually to some.

Regarding man's ability: again this is twofold.

Continental Arminians are more Pelagian believing that natural man is not so fallen that he cannot do good works or believe in the Gospel. Men are not guilty for the sin of Adam (original sin) and are only sick with sin and not dead in sins. [Charles Finney held a similar Pelagian view of man.] Men can believe the Gospel in their own strength; free will reigns.

Evangelical Arminians (Wesleyans) have a more Biblical view of the fall and the depravity and inability of all men. This is why they require a novel doctrine of prevenient grace. This unbiblical grace gives all men the ability and opportunity to believe the Gospel if they so choose. Free will reigns again.

The combination of the ability of man to choose the Gospel along with the sufficiency of grace for all men and the value of the atonement for all men means that man initiates salvation and co-operates with God in it. This denies many Biblical doctrines; all the doctrines of Grace and God's sovereignty. This is a synergistic system (man and God working together in salvation). However, the Bible teaches a monergistic system; God is sovereign in salvation; salvation is of the Lord. Thus men are dead in sins and can do no good work at all. God chooses some from mankind to be saved by his good pleasure in eternity and not by any reference to the future works of these people. God must draw people to Christ and must reveal Christ to the elect. God then gives the Spirit to these elect, via the Gospel message, and they are empowered to repent and believe.

The Scriptures required to back all this up would occupy several pages and we have referred to these in many other works. We will just give a small sample here:

Man's problem: complete inability due to sin

As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.' Rm 3:10-11

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1

The power of salvation is God's and not man's

The salvation of the righteous *is* from the LORD; *He is* their strength in the time of trouble. Ps 37:39

Salvation *is* of the LORD. Jon 2:9

The choosing (election) of some and the reprobation of others.

The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. Everyone proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD. Prov 16:4-5

'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. Rm 9:15-16

Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour? *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, *even* us whom He called. Rm 9:21-24

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Eph 1:4-5

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 2 Thess 2:13

Therefore God loves some and hates others

As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' Rm 9:13

The wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind *shall be* the portion of their cup. Ps 11:5-6

Jesus only saves his people

You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins. Matt 1:21

The church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28

God gives faith and grace to the elect

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Jn 1:12-13

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship. Eph 2:1-10

God draws his chosen people to Christ

No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. Lk 10:22

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. Jn 6:37, 44

Trials

Q. Does the Gospel change us into blessed beings, full of prosperity, affluence, healing and peace?

A. No! Our earthen vessel of human frailty is not changed until the end when Christ gives us a new physical body. Until that time we are subject to affliction, perplexity, persecution, and being struck down. God uses this for our sanctification to be more like Jesus. Trials are good for us.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. *We are* hard pressed [i.e. afflicted, troubled] on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Cor 4:7-11

We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22

All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim 3:12

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